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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (at Lomé), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (at Lima) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (at Kathmandu) were established by resolutions of the General Assembly in 1986, 1987 and 1988, respectively. With the exception of the posts of Director, which were approved by the General Assembly at the P-5 level for each Centre, to be financed from the regular budget, voluntary contributions were envisaged as the source of financing for the substantive activities of the Centres as well as for their administrative and operating costs. Over the years, the continued decline in voluntary contributions from interested Governments and income from other sources to the trust funds established for purposes of financing the activities of the Centres, as is evident from annexes I and II to the present report, has seriously affected the functioning of the Centres, especially the Lomé and Lima Centres. The Regional Centre in Kathmandu has not suffered as severe a malaise as have the other two Centres since its activities are also funded from the United Nations Trust Fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues and the United Nations Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities. It is noteworthy that the financial resources of the Centres continued to decline in the post-cold-war era despite a broad recognition that the Centres could play a meaningful role in the changed international security environment where regional approaches to disarmament have acquired increasing importance.

2. In this connection, it should be recalled that in his report on the activities of the three Regional Centres, submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, the Secretary-General brought to its attention that the Regional Centres "remain unable to function in the manner intended by the General Assembly because of inadequate financial resources. This is a result of a steady fall in voluntary contributions, in particular from Member States within the regions concerned" (A/50/380, para. 5). the Secretary-General further stated that he "is therefore obliged to point out that unless Member States take early and effective action to reverse this trend, there will be no alternative to suspending even the reduced functions performed locally by the centres and closing their offices in the three capitals concerned". He foresaw in that eventuality that "disarmament activities of a regional nature would be carried out only by staff members based in New York or Geneva" (ibid., para. 6).

3. In his report on the question in 1996, the Secretary-General again drew the attention of the General Assembly to the serious financial situation of the Regional Centres. In that report, the Secretary-General noted that "despite my previous appeals, the centres continue to lack adequate financial resources and are not able to function in the manner intended by the General Assembly" (A/51/403, para. 5). Voluntary contributions for the Lomé and Lima centres again showed the pattern of recent years and remained insufficient to implement the required activities. He further brought to the attention of the Assembly that "without an adequate and stable resource base, the future viability and effective functioning of the centres will be severely undermined. Insufficient financing continues to make it difficult to maintain them" (ibid., para. 20).

4. The Kathmandu Regional Centre, while not lacking in contributions to finance substantive activities, is affected by limited contributions to cover its administrative and related costs. For this reason, direction of the Centre continues from United Nations Headquarters in New York, an arrangement that will apparently remain in force until a reliable means can be found to finance the Centre's operational costs at Kathmandu. This matter was also commented on in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly, noting that "persistent serious financial constraints have made it impossible for the Centre to recruit any local support staff" (A/51/445, para. 13).

5. Against that background, the Secretary-General, in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, submitted that the three P-5 posts provided for the three Regional Centres at Kathmandu, Lomé and Lima in 1996-1997 should be abolished.

6. In its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) "recalls its recommendation that the Secretary-General review the financial viability of those centres". In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, "the proposal of the Secretary-General to abolish the centres should be drawn to the attention of the First Committee and that before the General Assembly takes a decision on the matter, the Secretary-General should provide additional information on the status of voluntary contributions and, as concerns Lomé, the status of discussions with UNDP" (A/52/7 (chap. II, part II, para. II.12).

7. The present report is submitted in response to the Advisory Committee's recommendation. It updates the financial situation of the Regional Centres since the issuance of the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the Centres, (A/51/403, A/51/445 and A/52/309). The status of discussions with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regarding possible financial support for the Centre in Lomé is also provided. Information on voluntary contributions received, other income and expenditures through 31 December 1996 from the trust funds established for the purpose of financing the activities of the Centres is contained in annex I to the present report, readily demonstrating the insufficient financial resources and questionable viability of the Centres, especially in Lomé and Lima. Since the activities of the Regional Centre in Kathmandu are also funded from the United Nations Trust Fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues and the United Nations Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities, similar information is presented in annex II on those funds. Attached also to the report, as annex III, is the text of an explanation of vote by Mr. Martínez-Morcillo (Spain) to the First Committee at its 26th meeting, on 17 November 1995, as requested by him.

II. FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE REGIONAL CENTRES

A. Regional Centre in Africa

8. In his report to the General Assembly on the Lomé Regional Centre (A/51/403), the Secretary-General informed the Assembly that the level of contributions to the Centre had continued to decline, receiving only $4,000 for 1996. For 1997, while $15,000 had been pledged, only $5,000 was received. The balance of the fund as at 30 June 1997 stood at $134,257, with recorded expenditures of $80,375.

9. In its resolution 51/46 E of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General, "in the light of the current financial situation of the Regional Centre, to intensify his efforts in exploring new ways and means of funding, and to continue to provide all necessary support to the Regional Centre for better achievements and results".

10. Pursuant to the Assembly's request, the Secretary-General explored alternative means of financing for the Centres. One such possible means was through fostering links between the disarmament and the development sectors of the United Nations system. In that connection, consultations were undertaken with UNDP, and agreement was reached to launch a consultancy mission in 1997, with funding from UNDP, to assess the level of support for the Centre in the region. After detailed discussions, in particular with the regional States and with governmental and non-governmental organizations, including foundations, the consultancy mission concluded that there was much support for the continuation and strengthening of the Centre's work in the region, especially in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. In their report, the consultants recommended, inter alia, that (a) action should be taken immediately to appoint a Director for the Centre; (b) the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP should work together to ensure the sustainability of the Centre, since the latter's work plan was expected to reflect the concerns of both institutions on peace and security, good governance, peace-building and sustainable development; (c) the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP, as well as Member States and, in particular, the host State, should make every effort to help the Centre raise funds for its crucial transitional year, 1998; a grant of $150,000 would be the minimum needed for this transitional period; a more stable process of funding the Centre must also be found; and (d) the Director should use the first six months of 1998 to develop, in consultation with the OAU secretariat, a five-year programme of work to submit to potential donors for funding support.

11. The report of the consultants is currently under consideration within the Secretariat and UNDP. Should agreement be reached on the recommendation that UNDP provide a grant in the amount of $150,000, this would make it possible to continue the operations of the Centre beyond December 1997. In the absence of that grant or other contributions, the Secretariat might have to suspend the operations of the Centre as of 1 January 1998.

12. The host country, Togo, has pledged the equivalent of $10,000 in voluntary contributions to the Centre during 1997. In collaboration with other regional States, it has initiated various fund-raising efforts within and beyond the region.

13. Since the last locally based Director of the Centre resigned in July 1992, the post has remained vacant because of the reduced number and level of activities owing to declining financial contributions.

B. Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific

14. In his report to the General Assembly on the Kathmandu Regional Centre, the Secretary-General reiterated that "in accordance with its mandate, all activities of the Centre should be financed from the voluntary contributions of Member States and other interested organizations. In order to use the scarce available resources so far as possible for substantive activities, it was impossible for the Centre to recruit any local support staff. For that reason, the Director continued to operate from United Nations Headquarters in New York, an arrangement that will have to remain in force until a reliable means can be found to finance the Centre's operating costs at Kathmandu" (A/52/309, para. 14).

15. As stated in that report, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the Centre in 1996 (A/51/445), voluntary contributions in the amount of $197,167.57, earmarked for specific activities, have been received as of July 1997. The balance of the fund as at 30 June 1997 stood at $350,340, with no recorded expenditures.

16. Several States and other interested organizations have pledged to continue to make contributions to the trust fund. Furthermore, two Governments have indicated their readiness to host regional meetings in 1998. The activities of the Centre in all likelihood are also expected to continue to receive funding from the contributions made to the United Trust Fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues, whose fund balance was $1,368,293 as at 30 June 1997, and the United Nations Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities, whose recorded balance was $244,932 at that date.

C. Regional Centre in Latin America and the Caribbean

17. In his report to the General Assembly on the Lima Centre (A/51/403), the Secretary-General informed the Assembly that, owing to the lack of sufficient voluntary contributions to finance the Centre's activities as well as its administrative costs, he decided to suspend the operation of the Centre in July 1996 until further notice.

18. Since that report, voluntary contributions in the amount of $10,421 have been received; at 30 June 1997 the approximate balance in the Trust Fund for the Centre stood at $41,710, with recorded expenditures of $32,534. The Government of the host country has communicated to the Secretary-General its interest in reactivating the operation of the Regional Centre. In this regard, it is

examining the level of financial contribution it would possibly make towards the maintenance and operational support of the Centre, and is studying options for an appropriate physical site in Lima for the Centre.

19. In addition, the Government of Chile has officially communicated to the Secretary-General its interest in seeing the activities of the Lima Centre reactivated and indicated its readiness to support such a development. Furthermore, a number of organizations, including UNDP and the Organization of American States, and several research institutes, have indicated that, should the activities of the Centre be reactivated, there might be areas of common interest and activity.

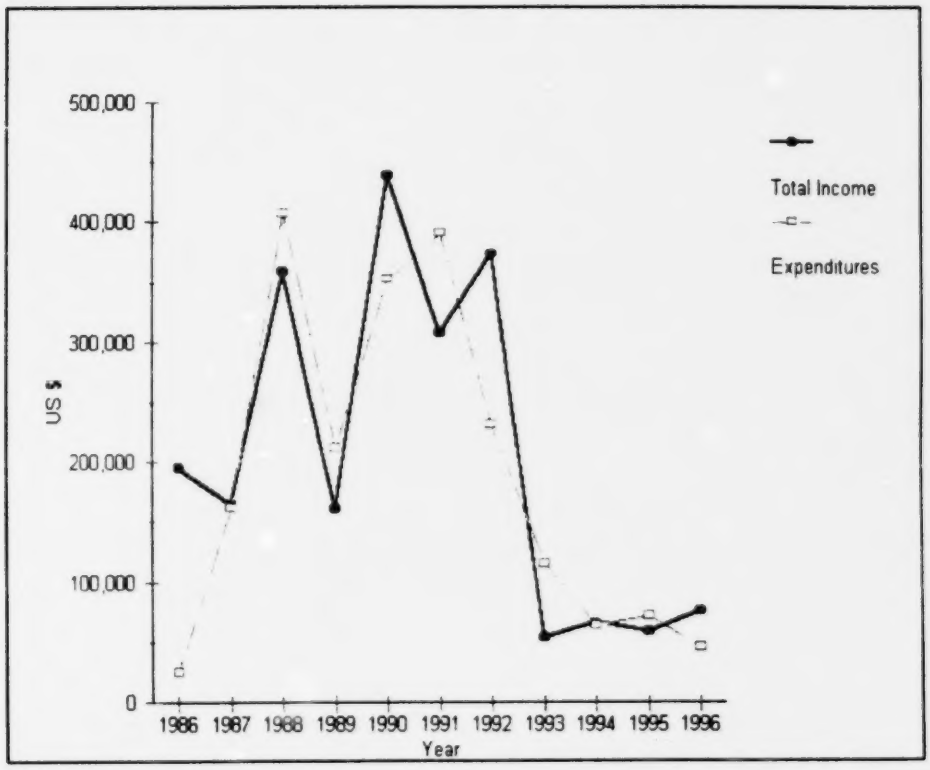
20. Following the resignation of the locally based Director of the Lima Centre in August 1993, the post remained vacant. This was largely due to declining voluntary contributions, which were insufficient to finance the activities of the Centre.

ANNEX I

Income received and expenditures of the Trust Funds for the Regional Centres since their inception

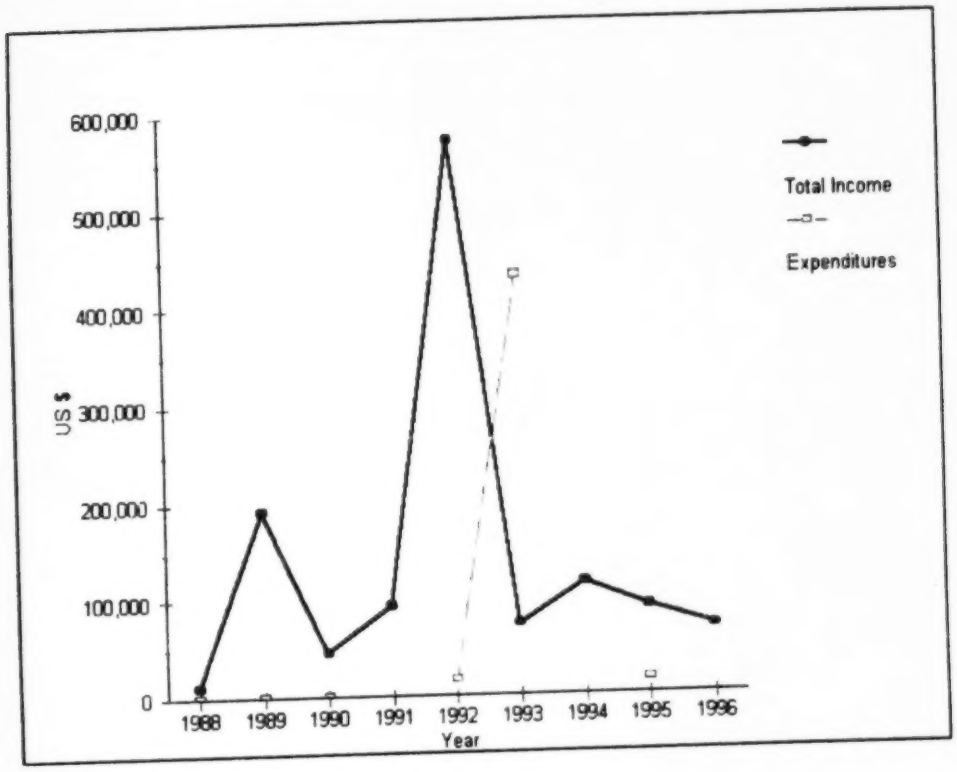
(United States dollars)

A. Regional Centre at Lomé



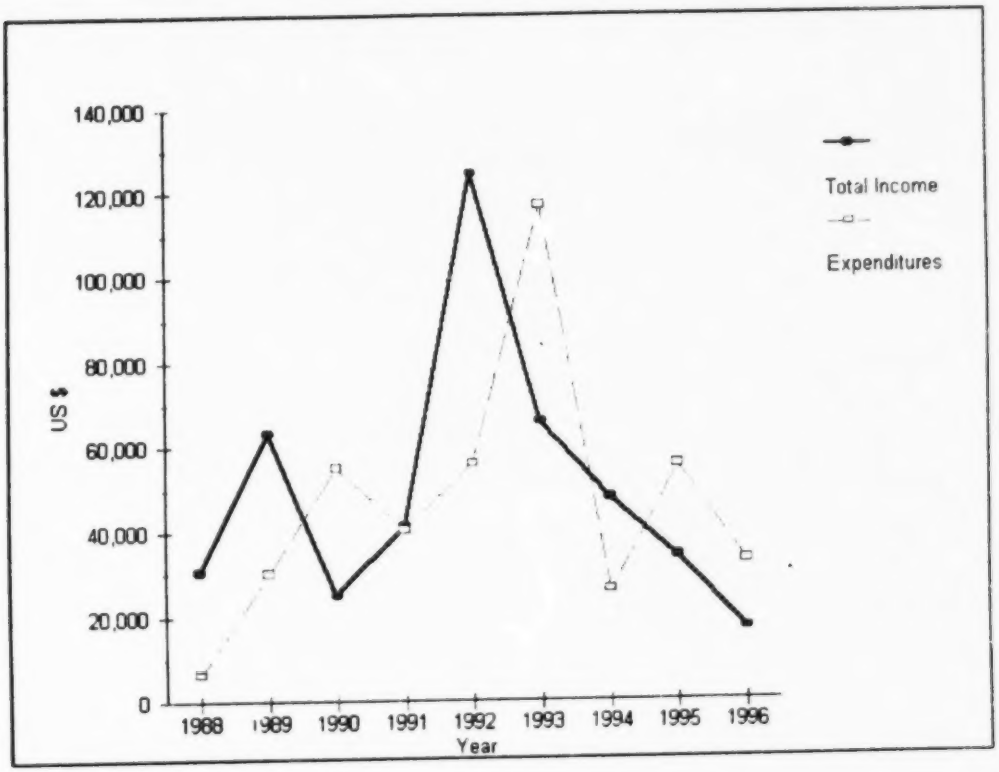
Includes public donations, subventions, interest income, and miscellaneous income (e.g. gain on exchange).

B. Regional Centre at Kathmandu



Includes public donations, subventions, interest income, and miscellaneous income (e.g. gain on exchange).

C. Regional Centre at Lima

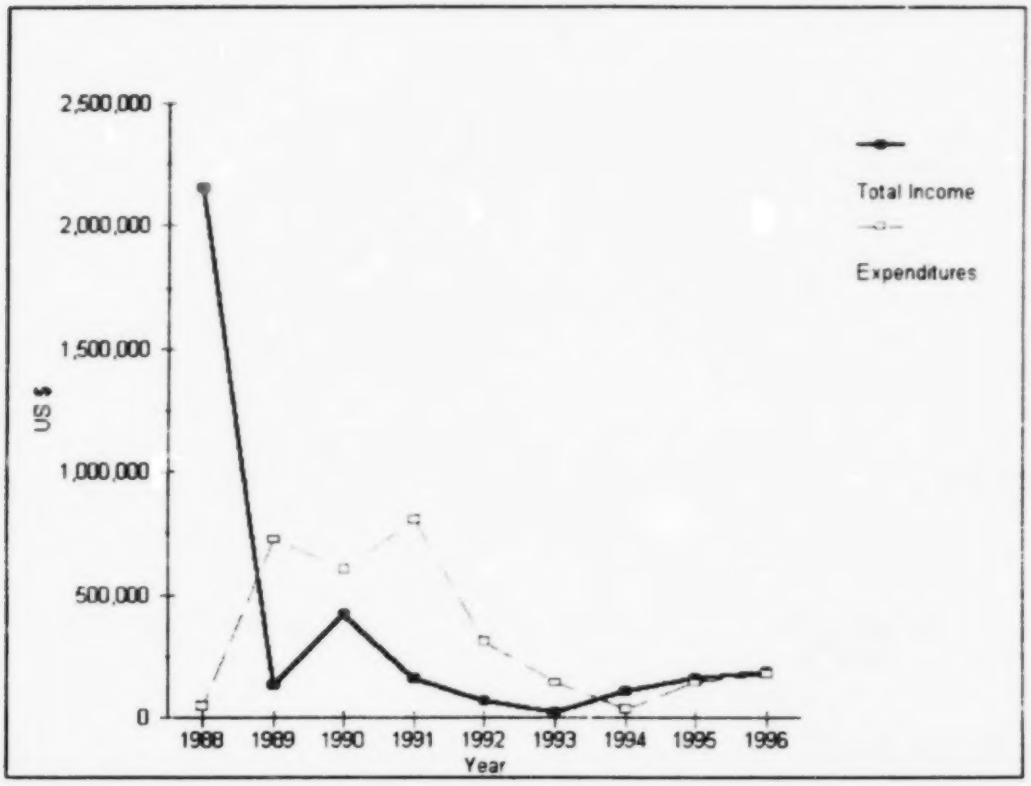


Includes public donations, subventions, interest income, and miscellaneous income (e.g. gain on exchange).

ANNEX II

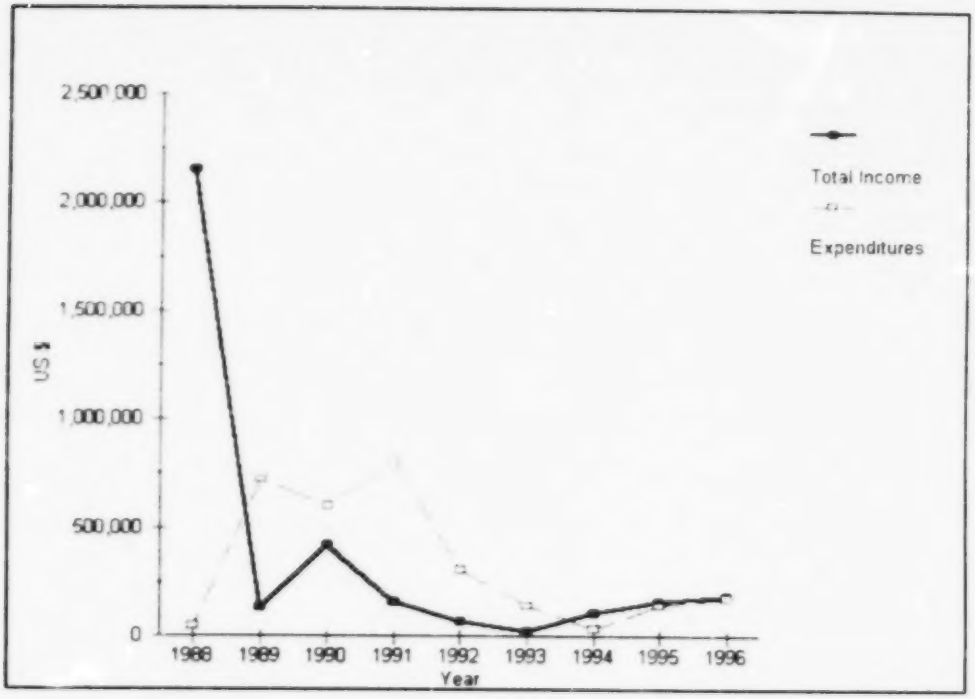
Income received and expenditures of the United Nations Trust Fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues and the United Nations Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities since their inception

A. United Nations Trust Fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues
(United States dollars)



Includes public donations, subventions, interest income, and miscellaneous income (e.g. gain on exchange).

B. United Nations Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities
(United States dollars)



Includes public donations, subventions, interest income, and miscellaneous income (e.g. gain on exchange).

ANNEX III

Statement made by Mr. Martínez-Morcillo (Spain) to the First Committee at its 26th meeting, on 17 November 1995

"I am speaking to express the position of the European Union on draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.24, entitled 'United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean', which has just been adopted without a vote.[a] I also speak on behalf of the following countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

"Our countries continue to believe that regional disarmament efforts continue to be important. Consequently, we regret to note that the United Nations Regional Centres in Lomé and Lima have been unable since last year to carry out substantive activities because of a lack of resources, which should have come from voluntary contributions.

"Unfortunately, this is the continuation of a pattern we have seen for a number of years. The draft resolution does not reflect these facts nor does it take into account the Secretary-General's report this year,[b] which makes it clear that the closure of the centres may be dictated by a lack of resources.

"As we see it, it would not be responsible for the First Committee to ignore the grave financial circumstances facing the United Nations, which the Secretary-General has rightly drawn to our attention. We do not feel that we can turn our backs on reality any longer. If, despite our renewed efforts every year, it is not possible to secure financing through voluntary contributions, which will make it possible for the centres to carry out substantive work, then we share the Secretary-General's view that the centres will have to be closed and the activities carried out from United Nations Headquarters. The approach to a draft resolution next year should be reconsidered, therefore, in the light of these circumstances.

"I should like to add that in accordance with the same principles our delegations have joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.31/Rev.1, entitled 'United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific'. This Centre attracts levels of voluntary resources that are sufficient to enable it to carry out valuable work. I request that the text of this explanation of vote be annexed to next year's report of the Secretary-General on these centres."

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[a] Later adopted without a vote by the General Assembly on 12 December 1995 as resolution 50/71 C.

[b] A/50/380.